

Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice
A National Conference Call to Discuss the Evaluation of
The Environmental Justice Collaborative Model
Wednesday, October 17th, 12:30pm – 1:30pm

CONFERENCE CALL MINUTES

After introductions, **Charles Lee** welcomed and thanked participants and began by giving a brief synopsis of the complexity of the collaborative problem-solving model. He stressed the importance of the final evaluation/case-study report, as the report will impact future Environmental Justice (EJ) projects.

Eric Marsh summarized the status of the report stating that four out of the six projects selected for the evaluation effort were nearly done with interviews/data collection. These four include the Spartanburg (SC), New Madrid (MO), Metro East (MO), and Barrio Logan (CA) projects. The two remaining include the Bridges to Friendship (DC) and Metlakatla (AK) projects. Eric also walked participants through the draft report outline.

When asked how the report could be used and how the report could be most useful, **Romel Pascual** stated, and **Richard Gragg** and **Deeohn Ferris** agreed, that the report could be a useful tool to demonstrate that the interdisciplinary collaborative method is a positive approach to solving EJ issues. Deeohn added that she would like to see the report demonstrate 1) the substantial level of investment (time, money, etc.) that the collaborative model requires; 2) the significant effort it takes to coordinate stakeholders; and 3) the value the collaborative model brings to EJ issues by drawing from different ranges of experience, strength, resources, etc. Richard added that he would like to see the report 1) identify the challenges of creating partnerships; 2) describe ways to address these challenges; and 3) recommend that funds be made available to help address these challenges. **Charles Lee**, responding to Deeohn's and Richard's statements, said that he would like to see key project elements that lead to success identified, one of which is an investment of resources.

Lewis Michaelson stated that the report must be made applicable to other projects so that it could aid people creating new EJ projects. **Charles Lee** concurred. **Larry Charles** suggested that the use of negotiation as a tool for stakeholders should be addressed in the report. Charles Lee agreed saying that the tools of mediation, negotiation, and alternative dispute resolution would all be beneficial to discuss in the report.

Danny Gogal suggested that the report could be made more useful by reordering the report outline. He said that the report should be written as a succinct whole similar to an executive summary. Namely, he suggested that the report *not* address the individual projects separately, but instead attach the projects as appendices that would be referenced. Also, he suggested, referring to section six, "Key Factors Contributing to Successes and Challenges of Collaborative Partnerships", that the successes and challenges components be addressed separately.

Romel Pascual asked if the report would address the infrastructures of partnership organizations, in particular those of government bodies, at the time the EJ project started. **Katherine Dawes** said yes, and that it would be a theme in the report.

Molly Singer asked for clarification between section four, “Value of Collaborative Partnerships to Address EJ Issues”, and section six, “Key Factors Contributing to Successes and Challenges of Collaborative Partnerships”. After a group discussion, **Katherine Dawes** concluded by stating that section four would focus on results of the partnerships and section six would focus on contributing factors that lead to successes or challenges. **Charles Lee** added that a focal point of the report would be the effects that the demonstration projects have on changing organizational behavior.

Danny Gogal suggested highlighting key themes in the report such as infrastructure and investment of resources, and grouping these themes into a section of the report that focuses on themes and recommendations. He further added that this section be made understandable for readers. In addition, Danny suggested that the report not be made too large or it would run the risk of being too imposing for readers.

Danny Gogal also suggested grouping the interviewee’s comments by stakeholder type (e.g., federal, state, community, etc.).

Larry Charles recommended that section four 1) show the need for the collaborative model’s strong, comprehensive approach to EJ project challenges; and 2) address the challenge of sorting out leadership for stakeholders, especially community stakeholders. He also recommended that section five show how federal involvement helps legitimize local actions. In addition, Larry suggested creating a database that would track people and organizations that work on EJ issues.

Jerry Filbin, the facilitator, prompted the group to move to the next agenda item, how to best share lessons learned. **Katherine Dawes** said hard copies of the report would be distributed and also the report would be put on the web. She asked for other suggestions.

Deeohn Ferris suggested that the report could be used in a workshop at EPA’s National Community Involvement Conference. **Charles Lee** agreed saying the report should be an educational tool that be made directly applicable to current EJ issues. **Michael Taylor** furthered the idea suggesting that the report be made into a workshop that hired presenters could give to groups across the country, stressing that an interactive format is the most effective way to reach people. Charles mentioned a workshop project EPA Region 4 is working could serve as a model to create this type of interactive workshop. Michael also suggested that the workshop document what the workshop participants want to accomplish. Deeohn suggested that the workshop could be a module included in the Environmental Justice Training Collaborative, and Charles Lee agreed.

Michael Taylor suggested that the EJ team ask the Brownfields program if they implement collaborative partnership building efforts, and if they had money available for such training. **Katherine Dawes** asked **Rey Rivera** to look into it, and Rey agreed to do so.

Charles Lee asked what else could be done to make the report come alive. **Molly Singer** remarked that the Evaluation Team needs to keep in mind what each of the stakeholders can take away from the report. **Richard Gragg** and Charles Lee agreed. Richard suggested the report accurately reflect the distinctive strengths and weaknesses in the projects and avoid making them all look the same. Charles agreed.

Larry Shannon asked if there were any EJ projects that did not succeed. **Charles Lee** responded affirmatively. Larry said that those would be important lessons learned. Charles

said that, indeed, there were important lessons learned here, the key being that the more the community was in charge of the project, the more success the project experienced. **Katherine Dawes** stated that similar conclusions were being derived from the projects that were selected for the evaluation, and, hence, that the same conclusion would be reflected in the report.

Charles Lee asked how to turn lessons learned into conclusions. **Lewis Michaelson** suggested that the report not become too detail oriented, to look for commonalities, and to look at lifecycles/phases of projects as they develop to best hold readers' attention. **Molly Singer** strongly supported the notion of phases in project development and said this type of information would lend itself to graphs and other visual representations. **Deeohn Ferris** agreed that a visual representation of the chronological phases of EJ project development would be very useful, and would make it easier to see the variable components and "exceptions to the rule." Molly referred to a decision tree that was created for Brownfields projects to use and offered to get copies to Katherine. Katherine expressed an interest in receiving a copy and suggested that such a visual would lend itself to an interactive web site.

Jerry Filbin alerted participants that there were only five minutes left on the call. **Charles Lee** thanked participants and invited further comments. **Lewis Michaelson** suggested addressing the "ripeness" of each project being evaluated. **Danny Gogal** suggested that a clear, bulleted guide be created on how the collaborative partnerships developed. **Larry Shannon** suggested that there be a monetary grant to States, and there be a focus on exchanging information. One example for doing this, remarked Larry, would be the creation of a database with contact information for people knowledgeable about EJ that communities could tap into.

The call ran out of time and ended with a quick round of goodbyes.